

CHAPTER 7

Dominant Seventh Chord

Basic Music (TC 12-41/NAVEDTRA 01244) describes the construction and interval relationships of a dominant seventh chord. In Harmony, the *dominant seventh chord* refers specifically to the diatonic chord which appears on the dominant scale degree. In minor the chord is borrowed from its parallel major just as is the dominant triad.

TRITONE RESOLUTION

An interval of a tritone appears between the third and seventh (leading tone and subdominant scale degrees) of the dominant seventh chord. Dissonant harmonic intervals such as the tritone of the dominant seventh chord require specific *resolution*. A regular resolution occurs when the third (leading tone) resolves up to the root of the tonic chord and the seventh (subdominant) resolves down to the third of the tonic chord. This is the most common resolution and satisfies the melody pull of the tendency tones.

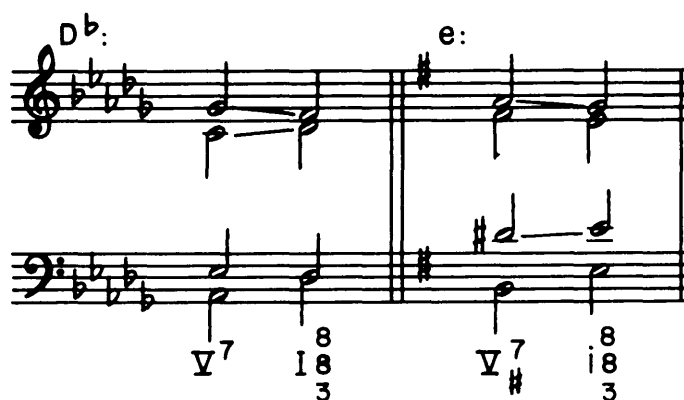


FIGURE 7.1: Regular Resolution

When the seventh of a dominant seventh chord appears in an upper voice and the chord progresses to a first inversion tonic chord, an *Irregular Resolution* must occur. The Bass voice has *taken* the note of resolution (third of the tonic chord) and the seventh in the upper voice will rise to the fifth of the tonic chord. This will often produce harmonic intervals of a diminished fifth followed by a perfect fifth. This is called *Unequal Fifths* and is acceptable under such circumstances.

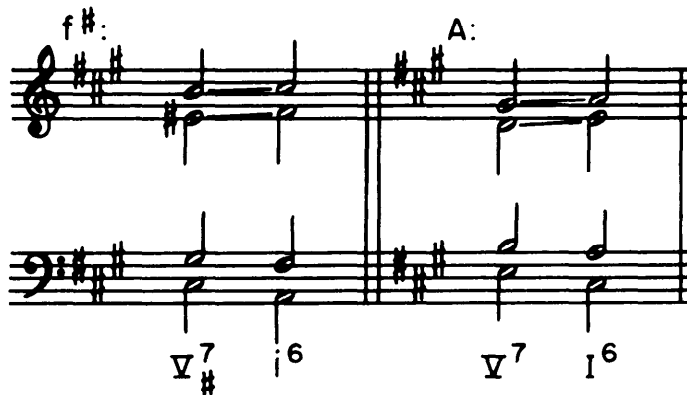


FIGURE 7.2: Irregular Resolution

APPROACHING THE SEVENTH

No new guidelines are required for approaching a dominant seventh chord except for the melodic approach to the seventh. The seventh of the dominant seventh chord is considered a dissonance and should **not** be approached by disjunct motion from above. This is a carry-over from 16th century contrapuntal technique, which required that no accented dissonance be approached in such a manner.

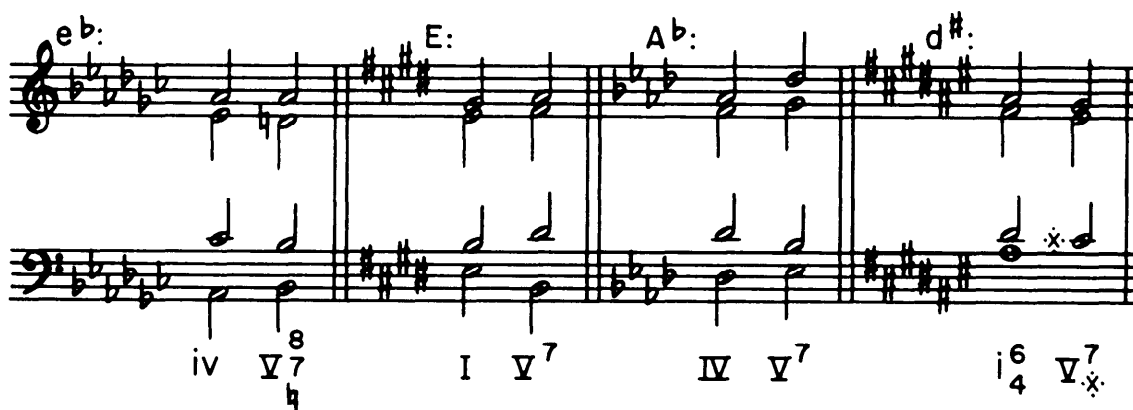


FIGURE 7.3: Approaching the Seventh

FIGURED BASS AND DOUBLING

Figured bass for a dominant seventh chord is 5, 5, or 5 with the accepted abbreviation of 7 or 7. In root position, the root of the dominant seventh may be doubled and the fifth

omitted with a figured bass of 7, 7, or 7. The 5 voicing is called *complete*; the 7 voicing is called *incomplete*.

When a complete root position dominant seventh resolves to a root position tonic chord, the tonic chord will be incomplete (fifth omitted). When an incomplete root position dominant seventh resolves to a tonic chord in root position, the tonic chord will be complete.

Figure 7.4 displays two systems of musical notation illustrating complete and incomplete dominant seventh resolutions. The first system shows resolutions for D major, B-flat major, and B major. The second system shows resolutions for G major, G-flat major, and C# major. Each system includes a treble and bass staff with notes and figured bass below.

System 1:

- D:** Treble staff has notes D4, F#4, A4. Bass staff has notes D3, F#3, A3. Figured bass: $\text{V}_5^7 \text{ or } \text{V}_3^7$.
- B^b:** Treble staff has notes Bb4, D5, F4. Bass staff has notes Bb3, D4, F3. Figured bass: $\text{V}_5^7 \text{ or } \text{V}_{q3}^7 \text{ or } \text{V}_q^7$.
- B:** Treble staff has notes B4, D5, F#4. Bass staff has notes B3, D4, F#3. Figured bass: V_q^7 .

System 2:

- G:** Treble staff has notes G4, B4, D5. Bass staff has notes G3, B3, D4. Figured bass: $\text{V}_7^8 \text{ or } \text{V}_7^8$.
- G^b:** Treble staff has notes Gb4, Bb4, D4. Bass staff has notes Gb3, Bb3, D4. Figured bass: V_7^8 .
- C#:** Treble staff has notes C#4, E4, G#4. Bass staff has notes C#3, E4, G#3. Figured bass: I_3^8 .
- C#:** Treble staff has notes C#4, E4, G#4. Bass staff has notes C#3, E4, G#3. Figured bass: V_7^8 .
- C#:** Treble staff has notes C#4, E4, G#4. Bass staff has notes C#3, E4, G#3. Figured bass: i .

FIGURE 7.4: Complete and Incomplete Dominant Seventh Resolution

When the dominant seventh chord appears in inversion a complete spelling will be used. The figured bass for a first inversion dominant seventh is $\overset{6}{5}$, abbreviated $\overset{6}{5}_3$. It resolves to a root position tonic chord.

Figure 7.5 displays two systems of musical notation illustrating first inversion dominant seventh and resolution. The first system shows resolutions for A major and C major. The second system shows resolutions for A major and C major. Each system includes a treble and bass staff with notes and figured bass below.

System 1:

- A:** Treble staff has notes A4, C#4, E4. Bass staff has notes A3, C#3, E4. Figured bass: V_5^6 .
- A:** Treble staff has notes A4, C#4, E4. Bass staff has notes A3, C#3, E4. Figured bass: I .
- C:** Treble staff has notes C4, E4, G4. Bass staff has notes C3, E4, G3. Figured bass: V_5^6 .
- C:** Treble staff has notes C4, E4, G4. Bass staff has notes C3, E4, G3. Figured bass: i .

FIGURE 7.5: First Inversion Dominant Seventh and Resolution

When the dominant seventh chord appears in second inversion, it must pass between I and I6. This requires an irregular resolution. When it occurs between I6 and I, regular

resolution is required. Figured bass for a second inversion dominant seventh is $\begin{matrix} 6 & \#6 \\ 4 & , & 4 \\ 3 & & 3 \end{matrix}$ or 4 , abbreviated $\begin{matrix} 4 \\ 3 \end{matrix}$ in major keys.

FIGURE 7.6: Second Inversion Dominant Seventh and Resolution

With the addition of a fourth note to a chord, a *third inversion* is possible. When the seventh of the dominant seventh is the lowest sounding note (Bass voice) the third

inversion is created. Figured bass for a third inversion dominant seventh is $\begin{matrix} 6 & 6 & 6 \\ 4 & , & \#4, \text{ or } \# \\ 2 & 2 & 2 \end{matrix}$ abbreviated $\begin{matrix} 4 & \#4 \\ 2 & , & 2 \end{matrix}$, or $\begin{matrix} \# \\ 2 \end{matrix}$ (sometimes 2). This inversion will always resolve to a I6 but is **still**

a *regular resolution* because the seventh in the Bass voice **does** resolve to the third of the tonic chord.

FIGURE 7.7: Third Inversion Dominant Seventh and Resolution

CHORD SUCCESSION

As indicated, the dominant seventh chord primarily progresses to the tonic chord. Occasionally, the dominant seventh chord may occur in a dominant seventh to subdominant to dominant seventh chord succession. When this occurs, the subdominant scale degree must be maintained as a common tone from chord to chord. This delays the resolution of the first seventh. The seventh ultimately resolves to the mediant scale degree.

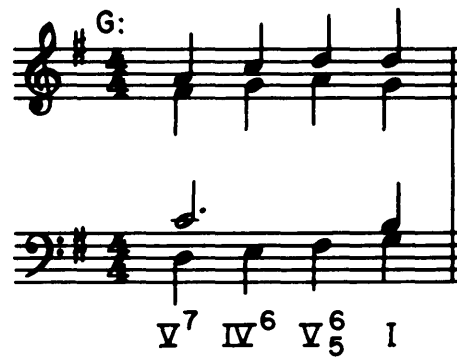


FIGURE 7.8: Dominant Seventh to Subdominant to Dominant Seventh Chord Succession

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